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# **A Vision of the Brazilian National Security Policy on the Amazon**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Located in the east central portion of South America, Brazil's land mass is 8,511, 996 square kilometers (larger than the 7,827,619 square kilometers of the Continental US), making it the fourth largest country in the world. Most of the territory is suitable for human habitation. There are no deserts or high mountainous regions, although the Amazon jungle certainly presents some natural adversities to a comfortable lifestyle. Brazil represents 43.7 percent of South America. Its land borders run for about 16,000 kilometers or 10,000 miles. It shares a border with all South American countries except Chile and Ecuador. It should be emphasized that there are no border disputes between Brazil and its neighbours. The Brazilian coastline runs 7,400 kilometers or 4,600 miles and contains some of Brazil's largest cities and ports. The Northeast and the Fernando de Noronha Archipelago allow the control of South Atlantic sea and air ways and enable the projection of power to the African continent's west coast as was the case during World War II. Inside this zone, US strategists drew a triangle encompassing the cities of Natal, Recife, and Fernando de Noronha, the gateway to the Natal-Dakar straight, and called it 'The Victory Springboard.' About 90 percent of Brazil's territory lies between the equator and the tropic of Capricorn, making it the largest tropical country, not only in the Southern hemisphere but in the world. Whereas Spanish America split into some 20 countries upon independence, Portuguese America became a single nation with a single language that transcends all diversities and regionalisms, allowing the people to understand each other easily. Brazil's population of approximately 155 million inhabitants is an example of racial coexistence as evidenced by the large number of Japanese, German, Italian, Arab, Jewish, Chinese and Korean descendants. This population has an interesting demographic profile: 75 percent are under 35 years old and 70 percent are concentrated in urban areas.

Brazil's transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy began in the 1940s and was consolidated between 1965 and 1980 when a diversified and solid economic structure was implemented. During this period, annual growth levels close to 10 percent were observed, a true record breaker. Brazil's natural regions are very distinct and allow for the existence of a varied agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as a diversified industrial complex which meets the country's needs. The oil crisis of the 1970s and the world recession of the 1980s hindered Brazilian growth. The increase of interest rates in the world financial market, which almost doubled the country's foreign debt, also had a negative impact. In spite of adversities caused by high inflation, poor income distribution and political crises, the country continues to grow at a reasonable rate with a positive balance in commercial trade. Its gross domestic product ranks the country among the top ten world economies. Currently Brazil's Government is developing a comprehensive economic plan which will lower the inflation rate from 40 percent monthly to 3 percent. The success of this plan will permit the recovery of higher rates of growth.

Geography is a strong component of Brazil's national security policy. The incalculable resources of the Brazilian Amazon have been coveted by many countries for a long time. There have been many international pressures on the area, including incursions by foreign powers starting as early as the seventeenth century. Brazil has resisted threats to its sovereignty over the Amazonia as well as other attempts by international organizations to interfere in its affairs. There are now serious challenges to be overcome as Brazil pursues settlement and development of the Amazon.

This article outlines Brazilian responsibilities for and autonomy over the Amazon area from a Brazilian perspective. It analyzes all aspects of the Amazon issue, including the national security policy and how it is applied in the Brazilian Amazon in order to ensure the integrity of the national territory.

## **A NEW WORLD ORDER**

Events in recent years - the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the failed Soviet coup - underscore revolutionary change in the international security environment. The end of the Cold War has ushered in a new era in which the regions of the world can resume historic ethnic, religious and territorial disputes largely frozen by superpower rivalry. The United States emerged as the only world power, strong both economically and militarily. A new world order, although not precisely defined, seems to be something like Orwell's 1984 with 'Uncle Sam' as the 'Big Brother'.

Economics is the most likely key factor in the new world equation. There is a tendency for nations to participate in an increasingly interdependent world economy, with integration policies and the establishment of common markets. Big economic blocs have been created in several areas of the world: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Economic Community and the countries of the Pacific Basin in Southeast Asia.

Democratization is the order of the day. Authoritarian regimes face disapproval and isolation. International organizations tend to have more influence over the political attitudes adopted by their members. On the other hand, states seek new ways to participate, trying to adjust to both the expectations of their societies and the current requirements of international political scenarios.

There is a strong trend towards the establishment of control mechanisms which seek to create obstacles for developing countries' access to high technology, be it related to military applications or to economic development. As a result of the end of the East-West confrontation, one can see a decrease in the importance of the Armed Forces' role. The continuing changes are profound and must be discussed on the basis of the new situation in which, at least for now, there are central political powers and an ever-increasing economic multipolarity.

Despite some of the difficulties already detected in wealthy countries, presently there is a tendency to preserve hegemonic positions. The surrounding countries will continue as isolated nations kept away from the decision-making centers.

## **REFLECTIONS OF A NEW WORLD ORDER ON THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES**

Latin American countries find themselves in peculiar geostrategic regions that accentuate marked differences among them. It is a great strategic mistake to believe that all Latin American countries are the same. They have different problems, different solutions, and most important of all, different potentials. Several of these countries participate in regional economic alliances and seek military ones. There is evidence of continuing or emerging insurgency and narco-subversion problems which require the participation of the Armed Forces, charged with the internal defense and security of their countries.

The current world situation has created the following effects in several Latin American countries: acknowledgment that their importance is only regional; a tendency to allow for a more flexible concept of sovereignty; formation of economic blocs; difficulties to honor international financial debts; difficulties implementing social programs; increasing emigration to developed countries; and reduction in defense-related spending. Specifically, in the security environment, Latin American countries have suffered higher or lower levels of pressure due to: the intervention of the Armed Forces in the fight against narcosubversion and organized crime; increasing support to democratic regimes; reallocation of defense-related spending; reduction of the Armed Forces combat power, and the acceptance of the 'Limited or Restricted Sovereignty' concept. For some governments the drug problem is characterized more and more as a national security issue. It is important to point out that there is a clear tendency to intensify the suppression of production sources, which are usually located inside the territories of some Latin America countries.

More and more, science and technology strengthen their influence as an element of power in strategic concepts; thus the technological gap between the First World and the peripheral countries becomes more evident. That gap process is managed by organizations which, by manipulating access restrictions to new technology and development of already existing technologies, maintain the unfavorable international status of those countries that also wish to participate in the realm of powerful nations. A lot of pressure is put on some Latin America Governments directed to the conservation of major natural resource areas. Using environmental protection arguments for keeping untouched major reserves of natural resources that exist today, special emphasis is being given to the still preserved native biodiversity resources. With increasing frequency, there have been initiatives to prevent immigration from underdeveloped countries through more effective restrictions and controls. The minorities already established are the target of an intense discriminatory campaign.

The globalization of communications and the fast technological development phenomena enable various political, cultural, military and other events to be witnessed by all, at the exact moment they occur. This has caused a cultural, ideological and sociological interaction which may either positively or negatively affect the national identity. It is clear that international sectors are showing particular interest in spreading a poor image of peripheral countries. The dissemination of such an image may cause, in world public opinion, a predisposition conducive to the acceptance of violations of the classic concept of sovereignty.

Regarding national security, the insistence on modes for demilitarization, disarmament and reduction in defense-related spending alludes to social reasons as the causes of the concept of national security policy, which is peculiar to each country according to its own situation, to be distorted in its objectives and ends.

## **BRAZILIAN NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY**

The Brazilian national security policy is primarily directed by the Brazilian Constitution, which was promulgated in 1988. This Constitution underscores the fact that Brazil is a Union of 26 states, municipalities and a Federal District and has as its basis: sovereignty, citizenship, human dignity, the social value of work and free enterprise, and Political pluralism.<sup>1</sup> The Federative Republic of Brazil has as its main goal: to build a free and fair society, guarantee national development, to eradicate poverty, to reduce social and regional inequalities and to promote welfare for all, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age or any other kind of discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning its international relationships, Brazil's policy is based on the following principles: national independence, prevalence of human rights, people's self determination, non-interference, equality among states, peaceful defense and resolution of conflicts, repudiation of terrorism and racism, cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind, and the assurance of political asylum. Brazil strives for the economic, political, social and cultural integration among Latin American people.<sup>3</sup> The Armed Forces: Navy, Army and Air Force are permanent and regular national institutions, based on discipline and hierarchy, under the supreme authority of the President of the Republic and designated for the defense of the country, the Constitutional

Powers and, when requested by legal powers, law and order. Military conscription is mandatory.<sup>4</sup> In Brazil there is no Minister of Defense. The Services report directly to the President through each Service Minister.<sup>5</sup>

Public security is a duty of the states and also is a right as well as everyone's responsibility. It is exercised to preserve order, to provide security to the people and their properties. To do this the country has the Federal Police, the Federal Highway Police, the Federal Railroad Police, the States' Civilian Police, the States' Military Police and the Military Firemen Corps.<sup>6</sup>

War will be waged only in case of foreign invasion or the threat of it, and requires presidential declaration. The Congress must approve the act.<sup>7</sup> The Amazon Forest, the Sea Sierra, the Coastal Zone and the 'Pantanal Matogrossense' are National Estates. All people have the right to live in an ecologically balanced environment which must be defended by everyone in order to preserve it for future generations.<sup>8</sup> According to Brazilian National War College doctrine, the Brazilian national interests can be identified as follows: democracy, national integration, national patrimony integrity, social peace, progress and sovereignty.

In order to back its national interests, Brazil can count on its people, the government and various institutions created to fulfill this goal. The Armed Forces - Navy, Army and Air Force - are specifically designated to defend the country. The Constitution also created a National Defense Council,<sup>9</sup> with ten permanent members, to advise the President in all subjects concerning the threats to national interests. As a defender of peace, Brazil has participated, as early as 1957, as a member of the United Nations in several peacekeeping operations. Egypt (1957-67), The Congo (1960-64), Angola (1989 to the present), Nicaragua (1990-91), El Salvador (1991 to the present), Bosnia (1992 to the present), Mozambique (1992 to the present) are the main examples.

Brazil has no grudges against its neighbors or any other country in the world. All boundary disputes have ended with a negotiated solution within our diplomatic tradition. It is not part of the Brazilian way of thinking to become the leader of South America or Latin America or any region. Development and growth for Brazil are internal needs. How can a country feed 155 million people, educate them, provide housing, transportation, security, health care and so forth, without growing? The country needs to create at least 3.4 million new jobs per year! This cannot be done without development.

## **GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON REGION**

The Brazilian Amazon is, undeniably, an area of great geopolitical importance. It is characterized by large territorial expanses, demographic emptiness, long borders, abundant natural resources (particularly water and mineral resources), socioeconomic complications, and considerable international interest. All together, these factors give the region its particular complexity as an international geopolitical issue. The Brazilian Amazon's geopolitical importance demands preservation of the natural environment and development of the area as part of the larger South American Amazon region. Geographically, the Amazon is a huge basin that drains an area of 7,300,000 square kilometers in the northern part of the South American continent. It encompasses territory in eight countries besides Brazil: French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

In 1978, Brazil took the initiative to bring eight neighboring countries into the Treaty of Amazonian Cooperation, also known as the Pan Amazonic Treaty. The 28 articles emphasized the following:

- development of the region was the exclusive right of the countries;
- preservation of natural resources was also part of their national sovereignty;
- cooperation to achieve these two objectives;
- harmony between development and ecological protection should be achieved; and
- cooperation on health care, river navigation, road building, scientific research, conservation and tourism.

It is important to highlight that over 60 percent of the South American Amazon, about 3,125,000 square miles, is Brazilian territory. This accounts for 60 percent of the total land area of Brazil.

To visualize the vastness of this expanse, consider that it could hold simultaneously within its boundaries the following European countries: Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Great Britain, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, the former Yugoslavia, and Albania.

Professor Samuel Benchimol of the Amazon State University puts it clearly, as follows: 'On a picture of the planet Earth taken from Mars, the enormous Amazon region could be described in the following way:

- 1/20 of the Earth's land surface;
- 4/10 of South America;
- 3/5 of Brazil;
- 1/5 of the world's available drinking water, and
- 1/3 of the world's latifoliate forest reserves'.[10](#)

The region has a rich fluvial system, with some 15,500 miles of navigable rivers, including the continent's main rivers. The Amazon River, the greatest of these, is fed by more than 1,000 tributaries and meanders for 4,000 miles, a length second only to the Nile's 4,100 miles. Some 2,500 of these miles are in Brazilian territory. The Amazon's average width is four miles; even 1,000 miles up-river it is often impossible to see from one side of the Amazon to the other.

The Amazon population is estimated at 16.5 million (11 percent of the Brazilian population), of which 60 percent are urban dwellers. Its demographic density is low: about three inhabitants per square kilometer. The rural areas are inhabited by settled farming populations, squatters in the agricultural frontier, rubber tappers and Indians. Currently, internal migration, more than reproductive growth, accounts for most of the Amazon's population increase. A large portion of the population relies on subsistence agriculture. Manaus is the main industrial center, where, because of its Free Trade Zone, several electronics industries have been established. The road system, although expanding, is still inadequate for the needs of the region, and the rivers continue to be the most widely used, internal means of communication. The mineral wealth of the Brazilian Amazon has been estimated at US \$30 trillion, with deposits of gold, tin, iron, copper, bauxite, uranium, potassium, rare soils, niobium, sulphur, manganese, diamonds and other precious stones, and possibly petroleum. New mineral deposits are still being discovered.

Although the Amazon is dissociated from the rest of the Brazilian territory and demographically sparse, Brazil has resisted threats against its sovereignty over this important region as well as other attempts at interference in Amazonian affairs by international organizations. There are now new serious challenges to be overcome as Brazil pursues settlement and development of the Amazon.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL ISSUE ON THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON**

International greed and attempts to interfere in the Brazilian Amazon area have been amply reported in the press. Examples of these include the following:

- In 1967-68, the Hudson Institute proposed a project conceived by the futurist Hermann Khan, known as the 'Great Amazon Lakes', that would have flooded an area fifteen times bigger than all the other proposed projects for this region combined.[11](#) Brazil rejected the idea.
- The Christian Church World Council, since 1981, has emphasized the following to their missionaries in the Amazon: 'The entire Amazon, a large portion of which is enclosed by Brazil, but also includes territories of Venezuela, Colombia and Peru, is considered by us a patrimony of humanity. Ownership of this vast area by the

mentioned countries is merely circumstantial ... The natives who live there are considered to be "inherited" by humanity, and do not belong to the countries who are supposed to be owners ...' [12](#)

- Two US groups, the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Wildlife Federation, have pressed the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to provide protection for the rain forest and the Indians. In December 1987, the Bank suspended the US\$ 58.5 million project loan because Brazil's Federal Government 'had failed to create institutions to prevent unchecked devastation of the forest and the overrunning of Indian lands'. [13](#)
- European parliaments worked, in 1989, through the European Economic Community (EEC) to try to interrupt the Carajás Project in the Southern area of Pará State (eastern Amazon), in order to keep it from exporting iron ore to many countries of the world." [14](#)
- In 1989, a subsidiary of Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation offered to buy Brazil's US\$115 billion foreign debt in exchange for mining rights over Amazon gold fields. Brazil's then President José Sarney said that 'Brazil's sovereignty cannot be swapped for anything'. [15](#)
- President George Bush, under the aegis of environmentalism, prevented Japan financing for construction of a road linking Brazil and Peru - the first road from the Pacific into Amazon. He claimed that the road would cause irreparable damage to the Amazon rain forest. [16](#) Also, American Senator Al Gore called the road 'a catastrophe waiting to happen'. He proposed legislation to protect the Amazon by pressing lenders to fund only ecologically sound development. [17](#)
- In early 1989, American Senators Cioffe and John Chafee visited the Amazon and afterwards said: 'The devastation is just unbelievable'. [18](#) At the same time, American Senator Robert Kasten spoke of the imperative of protecting 'our Amazon', arguing that one nation often does have a legitimate interest in the environmental practices of another. [19](#)
- Michel Rocard, the former French Prime Minister, suggested forgiveness of Brazil's external debt for a guarantee of the forest's preservation. [20](#) This proposal was endorsed by American Senators John Heinz and Timothy Wirth who stated to the Christian Science Monitor that 'Brazil is burdened by an overwhelming foreign debt. In a debt forest swap program, Brazil could exchange conservation of a set piece of forest for forgiveness of a certain amount of debt - an arrangement that benefits all of us environmentally and Brazil economically, as well'. [21](#)
- The UN environmental commission chaired by Norway's labor party Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland observed, 'the traditional forms of national sovereignty are increasingly challenged by the realities of ecological and economic interdependence'. [22](#)
- Noel Brown, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) chairman stated in 1990: 'I think the environment issue will rule the relations between countries and peoples. It will also re-examine the matter of territorial sovereignty'. [23](#)
- On 16 October 1990, in Paris, 'The People's Permanent Tribunal' - an entity subordinated to The International League for Rights and Liberation of People - which has a consultant status in the United Nations - put Brazil in a 'prisoner's dock' and considered it guilty, of adopting a predatory economic model for the Amazon area and for 'acts that killed a great number of Yanomami Indians and other indigenous groups'. The Court's President was the Belgian Professor Francois Rigaux, and among the 'members of the jury' were the French First Lady Danielle Mitterrand, and the writer Adolfo Perez Esquivel, winner of the Nobel Peace prize in 1980. [24](#)
- French President Francois Mitterrand stressed a variety of social colonialist ideas, which he defended at the 1991 Conference on Ecology at the Hague. He urged the formation of a supranational body to evaluate the behavior of governments on environmental matters, raising the principle of *devoir d'ingerence*. [25](#)
- In 1991, the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, said that 'the countries constituting the so-called Group of Seven need to reach an agreement with the Brazilian Government so that rules for the administration of the Amazon can be established'. [26](#)

Such statements suggest that international designs on the Amazon could directly affect Brazilian sovereignty. [27](#)

The Amazon international issue is a typical case of disinformation, media manipulation (mainly US) and ignorance. The disinformation campaign is so big that it generated a change of the name of the forest. Suddenly, the Amazon Jungle, a tropical forest, was transformed by some environmental group into 'The Rain Forest', an

excellent name to product. Who wants to save jungles? Probably only Tarzan and Jane ... But, Rain Forest, Oh! That is really a good cause to fight for ...

Actually, all of this seems to be intentional distortion. Brazil's interests are not correctly assessed, the data published by the press have been exaggerated or wrong, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have used the Amazon 'rain forest' issue to raise money by creating alarm about a non-existent menace - the destruction of the jungle. It is also clear that the entire matter has an economic and political motivation. Forest, Indians and ecology are a kind of mask avoid the development of a region everybody knows is rich in minerals and other biodiverse resources. Certainly, there is something more than mere concern for better conditions of life on Earth behind the interest expressed in the Amazon by so many 'ecologists'.

The environment is a serious issue in Brazil. The Brazilian Constitution legislates about the environment in seven articles. There is no tolerance or connivance with any damage to the environment. Brazil is not a 'pollution country' and the preservation of the environment is tied to development.

## **THE NARCO-GUERRILLA**

Drug trafficking has become an important threat to peace and stability in the countries of the Amazon Region. This activity increases corruption and criminal rates and is considered a radical political and social destabilizing factor. The partnership involving the drug cartels and revolutionary movements allows their control of large areas of the territory and makes law enforcement difficult. The constant discovery of new traffic routes shows the extent of the problem.

The terrorism supported by radical politico-ideological groups and drug-related organizations has undermined the economies and stability of the countries where they operate. The main drug-producing countries are Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. However, drugs are a problem in other South American countries, such as Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela, which are being used as routes for exporting drugs.[28](#)

The Bolivian government, together with international organizations, has formulated the coca strategy (defined as alternative development and replacement of coca cultivation), to be started through the eradication of the surplus cultivation. Appropriate programs will facilitate the replacement of such cultivation by export products which will provide poor farmers an alternative crop promising an adequate income and will indirectly contribute toward prohibition. Drug traffic represents the main threat of aggression within Bolivia and is able to spread beyond that country's borders.

In Colombia, the union of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) with the Cartels has given rise to narco-terrorism. The Colombian Amazon region has been used extensively for drugs production, in particular cocaine. Equipment and makeshift laboratories have been installed in the jungle. In February 1991, a FARC guerrilla raid was made against an Army post on the Brazilian side of the border. That attack provoked a successful military operation by, Brazilian and Colombian Armed Forces, each one on its side of the border. The ties between guerrillas and drug dealers in Colombia tend to spread throughout Latin America, since their business is profitable and allows the guerrillas to maintain the so-called war economy, based on war taxes for multinational and large companies.

In Peru, when *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) headed toward the Alto Huallaga to establish the second subversive front (the first one is Ayacucho), they shifted their actions to defend the 'interests' of coca cultivators in exchange for their subsequent imposition of conditions on production, trade and transportation activities. Though this agreement, the drug dealers provide the subversive organizations with weapons and money in exchange for protection of their flights and actions that prevent the interference of Security Forces. Today, Shining Path openly participates in all phases drug traffic (planting, processing and marketing). The alliance between narcotraffic and subversion in Peru is the

greatest threat both to national and continental stability, due to the possibility of its spreading to other countries which are not yet involved in this problem. But it is also clear that since the subversive organizations got into drug production and marketing they have lost their revolutionary convictions and allowed both leaders and members to degenerate.

## THE GOLDMINING ISSUE

Because of its huge territorial expanse and its varied resources, the Amazon has been the target of many mining disputes. Most of the mineral-rich deposits are found in Indian regions. This has led to the invasion of goldminers into these areas, and their disruption of Indian cultures. In addition, gold prospecting has been carried out with great intensity along the border, especially in Amapá, Roraima, Amazonas and Rondonia states, resulting in incidents with French Guiana, Venezuela, Colombia and Bolivia. The most promising areas for goldmining are either encumbered by exploration or are in Indian areas. Disputes over these areas give rise to conflicts between goldminers and mining companies, goldminers and Indians, and mining companies and Indians. A related problem is the flow of contraband metals and precious stones over the border into neighboring countries. From 1986 to 1989, the amount of illegal production of gold was extremely large: 39.6 percent and 65 percent respectively, of the total production.[29](#)

The Brazilian government is engaged in solving the problems associated with goldmining in order to prevent potential internal disturbances, avoid to harm relations with neighboring countries, and prevent the projection of a negative image of Brazil's Indian and environmental policies.

## THE INDIAN SITUATION

The Amazon region, with about 137,000 Indians, has 62 percent of Brazil's Indian population. Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian (FUNAI) estimates a total population of around 230,000 Indians in an of Brazil; some of them - about 10,000 to 15,000 - have never been contacted by the authorities. FUNAI identifies 467 known Indian reserve areas in Brazil, occupying 520,000 square miles, or 10 percent of the Brazilian territory.[30](#) Thus, each Brazilian Indian (including children) has on average an area of 400 hectares in which to live. By comparison it is important to highlight that in the United States an Indian lives on only 18 hectares.[31](#)

The Brazilian 'Indian question' has been the subject of disinformation and deliberate mystification. For example, *The 1987 New State of the World Atlas* maintains that, in Brazil, 'the Indians have been bombed, poisoned, and deliberately infected with tuberculosis, influenza and smallpox.'[32](#) Although there have been cases of violence against Indians in Brazil, these have been isolated incidents, nearly always involving goldminers or cattlemen, and duly repressed by the responsible authorities. Public opinion, both in Brazil and internationally, has too often been manipulated by special interest groups who have tried to portray the Brazilian government, as well as many miners and cattlemen, as being Indian killers or predators of nature.[33](#) The Brazilian Indians have never before enjoyed such widespread sympathy from the mainstream society, both inside and outside Brazil.

In the international orchestration of this issue, now truly a universal clamor, it is possible to identify the desire for the formation of 'Indian Nations'[34](#) of which the Yanomami is a clear example. This idea is spread among the Indian tribes mainly by foreign 'missionaries'. Justifying their presence in the Indian reserves in order to tell them the 'Gospel', these individuals try to subvert their minds. It must be said that most of these 'missionaries' use different kinds of tools, some of them extremely sophisticated, in order to prospect mineral resources on the ground. Whatever the motivation for this clamor, the creation of sovereign Indian nations would form unwanted enclaves that would threaten the integrity of the Brazilian patrimony and cause profound economic damage.

Thus, the Indian issue at present involves Brazilian national sovereignty, touches on the external debt issue, tends to advance the internationalization of the Amazon area, and is connected to the issue of the environment.

## BURNING AND DEFORESTATION

As in most countries, the industrialization process in Brazil was not initially disciplined in the application of appropriate safeguards. Urban growth was accompanied by rapid expansion in the use of land for agricultural activities. In 25 years, the total area used for agriculture increased from 230 million to 320 million hectares. The process of opening up new areas was expanded haphazardly until it reached the Amazon region.

That rapid expansion hastened the deforestation rate. Until 1975, 2.8 million hectares had been deforested in the Legal Amazonia; that increased 7.7 million by 1978. Two years later, 12.5 million hectares had been deprived of their forest cover, a figure that grew to 59.8 million hectares in 1988 (according to World Bank estimates). In 1987, pictures taken from the NOAA satellite showed 20 million hectares burnt.<sup>35</sup> The 1987 data, however, were based on pictures taken from a satellite which is primarily used for weather purposes and has a 1,000-meter resolution (better data could have come from the LANDSAT satellite, which has 30-meter resolution).<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the deforestation figures released for 1987 shocked Brazil and the World. The deforested area within Amazon varies between 5 per cent and 10 per cent, depending on the reference time period and geographic area.

Brazil's National Institute of Spatial Research (INPE) tries to assert a fundamental difference between clearing (deforestation) and burning. This is based on the concept that all deforestation represents the use of the land, whereas not every burning is associated with deforestation. The peripheral agricultural areas of the tropical forest, for example, consist of savannahs and border vegetation; they have been burnt annually by small local farmers for quite some time, and this does not constitute aggression against the forest.

The government of Brazil has taken strong steps recently to curb environmental degradation. The new Constitution, promulgated on 5 October 1988, devoted a whole chapter to the issue. One of its provisions makes the existence of ecological reserves and parks compulsory in states and municipalities, referring to any environmentally harmful activity as a 'crime'.<sup>37</sup> In its efforts to sustain rational, responsible development of the Amazon proper, the Brazilian government continues to deal with several challenges. For the remaining intact areas, which correspond to over 90 percent of the Amazon region, the government must apply a policy of rational use, environmental conservation, and protection of both Indian communities and local populations.

The policy has achieved some success. In 1991, the problems of burnings and deforestation showed a decrease of approximately 30 percent in comparison to 1988. And this decrease is progressively growing today. It is due not only to the combined environmental protection and awareness campaigns carried out by the Brazilian Environment and Renewable Resources Institute (IBAMA), but also to the fact that prospecting activities attracted labor that would otherwise have been employed in the removal of forest cover. Aggressions against nature in the Amazon have decreased noticeably.

It must also be said that most of the international campaign against Brazil, regarding to ecology, is not pertinent. First of all, the Amazon is not the 'world's lung'. Anyone who studies plant ecology knows that while they grow, plants produce much more oxygen than they consume, thus enriching the environment. The Amazon, however, has already reached its climax and when this happens, almost all oxygen produced during the day is consumed through plant respiration and oxidation of dead vegetable matter. The Amazon has an amazing potential to produce oxygen but, ironic as it may seem, part of its fully-developed vegetation must be cut down to exploit the potential. It may be not necessary, after all, to manipulate oxygen production in the Amazon; the proportion of oxygen in the air globally has remained at a steady level over the last several centuries, on average 20.95 percent.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it is the sea - not the forest - that actually provides the oxygen that one breathes in the world, through its plankton, phytoplankton and various ocean micro-organisms.

Moreover, it is not true that the burning currently taking place in the Amazon is aggravating the 'greenhouse effect'. This expression makes a comparison between what happens in the atmosphere and that which occurs in

glasshouses where, in countries having colder climates, flowers and vegetables are cultivated. In greenhouses, light penetrates the transparent glass and heats the interior, at which point the heat cannot escape because the glass is a thermic isolator. In the same way, heat created with burning of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) remains trapped in the highest layers of the atmosphere, causing global warming of the Earth.<sup>39</sup> According to the Brazilian Institute for Space Research (INPE), Brazil produces, due to burnings in the Amazon region, close to 300 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. Industrialized countries emit over five billion tons of carbon dioxide each year, through factory chimneys and automobiles emissions. Therefore, the contribution of the burnings in the Amazon region to the greenhouse effect is of little consequence (about 1 percent).<sup>40</sup>

In the same way, there is no scientific evidence that extensive areas of the Amazon forest will become desert areas. For such a dramatic change to take place, a considerable climatic change would be necessary, especially alterations of wind cycles. No study has shown that this could happen. On the contrary, studies carried out in the Amazon jungle reveal that the forest has grown back rapidly in all burned-out areas as well as in other areas where deforestation has taken place. In fact, there is some risk of soil degradation, but even that can only happen in areas where the forest is used without adequate agronomic technology.

The Brazilian government and the Brazilian people are aware of how important it is not to devastate the forest, but it is important to underscore that they are also sure they must explore and develop the region, bringing benefits to the country and to the Brazilian people.

## **THE ARMED FORCES ROLE**

Brazil is geographically divided into military regions, each with its own military headquarters. Owing to its expanse of the Amazon region, Brazil's Army has two great commands: the Amazon (headquarters in Manaus - Amazon State) and North (headquarters in Belém - Pará State) Military Commands. The Brazilian Navy and the Brazilian Air Force also have headquarters at the same locations.

In essence, the mission of the Armed Forces can be summarized as follows: defend the country and safeguard the Constitutional Powers by providing internal and external security; and, complementarily, cooperate in the development of the areas furthest removed from the great population centers.

For the Army, which assumes the largest responsibilities, this translates into the following tasks:

- train to acquire the fundamental skills of jungle warfare;
- operate, when needed, in order to safeguard Brazilian sovereignty and the integrity of the national patrimony;
- perform permanent surveillance on the border areas;
- establish settlements, which entails settling civilian populations around the most remote military units;
- promote education, in all frontier units, using state teachers or Army personnel; the norm is elementary, junior high, and high school;
- provide health care, an important responsibility because in several interior centers and in the border areas only the Army is able to provide public health services (non-military, care to Brazilian military personnel represents only 15 to 20 percent of care provided by the Brazilian military doctors; the other 80 to 85 percent of the time they attend to Indians, civilians and military personnel from bordering countries); and
- improve transport, particularly through efforts of the 2nd Construction Engineers Corps Group (headquarters in Manaus, Amazon State, commands four Engineers Corps Battalions) in building and maintaining roads throughout the Amazon region.

In accomplishing its mission, the Brazilian Armed Forces, particularly the Army, have to face some adverse factors, such as:

- great distance between the border markers;
- demarcation of Indian areas near the borders;
- existence of organized guerrilla groups and powerful narcotraffic cartels in some neighboring countries;
- subversive action of foreign missionaries, not ever engaged in religious matters;
- subversive action of different foreign groups of non-governmental organizations about several subjects: ecology, Indian people defense, internationalization of the forest, and so forth;
- presence of Brazilian goldminers near the borders with neighboring countries; and
- developed countries' increasing political, economical and, currently, military interest in the Amazon region.

To develop the region, the Army must coordinate with several government agencies, responsible for specific sectors. Currently, the Brazilian Army has four Jungle Infantry Brigades (at about 4,500 people each - 85 percent Professional soldiers) besides the Construction Engineering Group, in the Amazon region.

The Jungle Warfare Training Center (CIGS), created in March 1964, in Manaus, to instruct and train troops for operations in the Amazon region, deserves special mention. The CIGS is internationally known for its training standards as well as for advances in the doctrine and research fields. Delegations from many friendly countries have sought firsthand knowledge of what some consider the best jungle warfare training school anywhere. In its 29 years of existence, the CIGS has graduated 1,984 highly specialized officers and NCOs who are now jungle experts, of whom 223 are from friendly nations, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, England, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Suriname and the United States. Furthermore, the CIGS contributes towards the establishment of the doctrinal principles and the development of training techniques for jungle warfare training.

Regarding the combat against narcotrafficking, it must be said that it is considered a crime without bail by Brazilian law. The Federal organization responsible for the repression of narcotraffic King is the Brazilian Federal Police. As a problem of public security, it is also the responsibility of the states' military and civilian police forces to fight it. The Armed Forces, mainly the Army, must supervise, support and sometimes train (special operations) the Federal Police. This mission gains importance when the focus is on the Amazon.

However, due to the linkage between the narcotraffic King cartels and the guerrilla movements, and the actions performed by the narcoguerrilla groups mainly in the Colombian and Peruvian borders, threatening the Brazilian sovereignty and the integrity of Brazilian patrimony, the Armed Forces plan and execute joint operations with the objective of eliminating that threat and providing adequate deterrence.

The establishment of an Army Aviation unit in Manaus increased significantly the mobility and combat power of Army units in that area. The mission in the Amazon region, because of the area's extremely difficult access, demands - more than in other regions - the deep involvement of the Navy and the Air Force. The Brazilian Air Force (FAB) carries out the normal tasks related with air space control and supports the Army in fixed wing air transport, besides the complementary development tasks. Similarly, the Brazilian Navy, besides its river patrolling mission and complementary development tasks, also provides support to the Army for riverine operations.

Currently, the Amazon region is the first strategic priority in the Armed Forces plans. This includes the preparation for rapid deployment of strategic forces of the three services, based outside the Amazon region. In that context, the Brazilian Armed Forces have started a program, to which the military attaches great importance, strengthen the protection of the Amazon border by increasing the Army posts and installing radars to control the air space in this vast and rich region. At the end of 1993 the National Defense Council, convened by President Itamar Franco, approved an investment of US\$500 million for the project to strengthen the military presence in the Amazon. The Council approved the development of the Amazon surveillance System (SIVAM) which will be added to the 'Calha Norte' Project (North Path) launched by the government of President José Sarney. The budget for this project has been reduced several times, but will now be restored.[41](#)

The SIVAM will in the short term be equipped with four radars and a certain number of armed Tucano Brazilian manufactured aircraft. Later, another 12 military posts in the Amazon region will be equipped with two-dimensional radars, ordered urgently from the Brazilian Secretariat for Strategic Affairs. One batch will also include the purchase of three mobile radars. Last July, the US company Raytheon, which leads a consortium of 25 national and foreign enterprises and companies, won the bid for the implementation of the Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM). According to the norms established by the Brazilian government, the enterprise chosen to implement SIVAM will have to provide integral financing for the project, which is to be implemented in eight years. Another demand by the Aeronautics Ministry, which conducted the bidding process together with the Strategic Affairs Secretariat, is that 50 percent of the equipment to be installed has to be manufactured in Brazil.

SIVAM will increase Brazilian control of the largest forest area on the planet and allow the implementation of sustainable development in the Amazon region, in addition to making air traffic more secure in the region.[42](#)

## **THE CALHA NORTE PROJECT (NORTH PATH PROJECT)**

The Calha Norte (North Path) Project is currently the Brazilian government's the most important strategy is securing the Amazon region. Its main goal is to promote the region's socioeconomic development and integrate the region with the rest of the country.

The Calha Norte Project is located to the north of the Solimoes and Amazon rivers and covers 4,100 miles of border that separates Brazil from the Guyanas, Suriname, Venezuela and Colombia. The Project involves a 100 mile-wide strip along those borders, or an area of 700,000 square miles; this is equivalent to a quarter of Brazilian Amazon and about 15 per cent of Brazil's territory. Within that strip, which runs from Oiapoque in Amapá state to Tabatinga in the Amazonas state, live 1.2 million people, a high percentage of whom are Indians. The strip also contains important mineral resources.[43](#)

The Calha Norte Project was created to achieve the goals related below:

- to strengthen bilateral relations, especially in the economic sphere, with neighboring countries;
- to increase Brazil's military presence in the area;
- to intensify the actions of Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian (FUNAI) among the indigenous population;
- to demarcate the area's boundaries;
- to stem the loss of foreign exchange caused by the flow of contraband metals and precious stones over the border;
- to combat drug-trafficking and preclude use of the region as a transit area for narcotics;
- to develop basic social resources; and
- to build economic development centers.[44](#)

The Calha Norte Project, through all its phases, was to support development processes in the Amazon without destroying the basic ecological characteristics of the area.

The participation of the Armed Forces is fundamental in increasing Brazilian presence in the border area and, through engineering projects, in the establishment of a basic infrastructure supporting the region's development.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The occupation of the Amazon area is a legitimate right of the Brazilian nation in an effort to achieve permanent national objectives of national integration, progress and peace. The Brazilian rejection of foreign

interference in their internal affairs is also legitimate and is supported by other permanent national objectives: integrity of national patrimony and sovereignty.

Even if the aim of the 'Amazonian Debate' is fair and just (to prevent the Amazon 'rain forest' against ecological aggression), this is Brazil's task and responsibility. Foreign 'tutelage' and/or political impositions are unacceptable. Brazil cannot renounce its right to exploit the natural resources of the Amazon. The 3rd Article of the Brazilian Constitution states that the objectives of the Brazilian Republic are 'to guarantee national development and to eradicate poverty ... and reduce social and regional inequalities'. The Brazilian nation is quite capable of finding solutions to its internal problems and applying them with the 'help' of responsible foreign organizations. Furthermore, the Brazilian people will also be able to identify and reject any attempts at interference with their sovereignty.

Finally, to achieve the security of the Brazilian Amazon area, the strategies being used are:

- increasing military presence in the region;
- developing sustainable economic activities;
- improving access to new environment-related technologies to preserve the ecosystem the environment; and
- applying resources from international financial institutions (e.g. the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank).

Nothing can better reflect the Brazilian people's will, determination, and enthusiasm to secure and integrate the Amazon area than the words of the great Brazilian soldier, and former commander of the Amazon Military Command, the late General Rodrigo Otávio, engraved on the front wall of all Brazilian Army posts in the Amazonia: *'Hard is the mission of defending and developing the Amazonia, but harder was that of our ancestors in conquering and maintaining it.'*

## ENDNOTES

1. Brazilian Constitution, 1st Article. [BACK](#)

2. Brazilian Constitution, 3rd Article. [BACK](#)

3. Brazilian Constitution, 4th Article. [BACK](#)

4. Brazilian Constitution, 142nd and 143rd Articles. [BACK](#)

5. The Service Minister is also Commander of the Service. [BACK](#)

6. Brazilian Constitution, 144th Article. It must be said that in Brazil the Armed Forces Police, with the same role of the MP in the US, are known by the Service name; Army, Navy, and Air Force Police. The States' civilian police, Military Police and Military Firemen Corps are subordinated to the states' governors. The Military Police and the Firemen are organized in ranks and use uniforms; they are also considered Auxiliary Forces of the Armed Forces, being a reserve force. Because of that they are inspected by the Brazilian Army. [BACK](#)

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